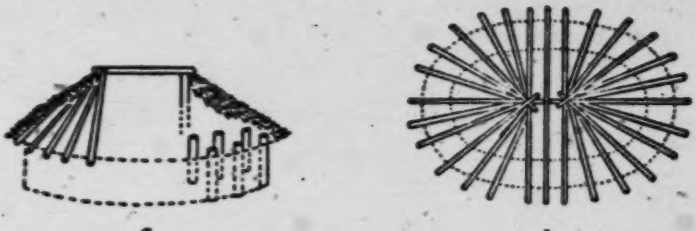
1:Nimuendajú E-5 (1941-1942) 1952
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

II. HABITATION

[36] The original Tukuna habitation was a large, isolated, communal dwelling, *maloca*, [592] occupied by more than one family. All settlements made up of a number of houses [717] together, like Tabatinga, São José do Javary, and Caldeirão, owe their origin to Neobrazilian initiative and were so contrary to tribal custom that the complaint was always heard that the Tukuna did not want to be herded together but would spread out again through the jungle.

I have often been told by the Indians themselves that in such or such a place [611] there was once a great maloca of this or that clan. I do not know how to interpret this statement, for though the clans of the Tukuna are patrilineal, the family is [591] more matriloeal than patriloeal, so that only in very special circumstances would all the men of one maloca belong to the same clan. However, the clan tẽ'ma (Burity)—if, as tradition says, its members once spoke a language different from that of the other clans—might have been collectively localized.

342



a *b*

Fig. 1. Maloca or communal dwelling. *a*. Sketch showing roof and interior construction. *b*. Plan of rafters.

Houses

These houses were apparently circular; actually, however, there was always a small, rectangular central section, with a semicircular roof bay at each end (fig. 1). The rafters of this rectangular section, which formerly was only some two or three meters long, rested on a short ridgepole supported by pillars or posts. At each end, a little below the ridgepole and in the angles formed by the two outer pairs of rafters, there was a small horizontal crossbeam fastened to the rafters, and upon this rested the rafters of the roof bay (fig. 1, *b*).

Two series of vertical supports divided the interior into two concentric parts, the inner series—at least, the highest and strongest—being of *acapú* wood. The [824] house was covered with *caruná* thatching, the stems being intertwined and attached to a long lath of *paxiuba*[1] wood. The tips of the leaves were split and were also intertwined. The laths with the thatching attached were tied horizontally on the rafters with strips of the inner bark. For the first three or four years, at least, this covering was an absolutely impermeable protection from the tropical rains.

The walls, more or less the height of a man, were made of small poles of paxiuba wood, or of the same material as the roof. In a few houses the interstices were filled

[1] An exceedingly tough Amazonian palm (*Socratea exorrhiza*), the roots of which are so thorny that they are used to scrape manioc roots.

1:Nimuendajú E-5 (1941-1942) 1952
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

turn to the paternal house. The clearing that her husband made, and which she planted and took care of, is hers, since "a man has arms to make another." In general, a divorced woman's children remain with her, but the former husband may demand them for himself; if so, he cannot be denied them. Also, if the wife's family is in economic difficulties, she may oblige the divorced husband to care for and support the children. Often, women divorced in this way do not marry again but carry on relations with whom they please, that is, away from the parental roof.

Several times I heard older Indians complain of the increasing fickleness with which certain youths contract, and shortly thereafter dissolve, marriages. I observed two marriages in which the young husband abandoned his wife after a week, leaving her for no apparent reason, never to return. It appears to me that fickleness in marriage is not only increasing among the youths but is also prevalent, on a smaller scale, among the girls. It is related to the increasing proletarianization of a certain section of the tribe through the influence of industrial establishments in the region. Many of these establishments provide food and prostitutes for the young men whom they employ, making marriage unnecessary for them.

Adultery.—In adultery, the woman is the only one considered responsible. Perhaps the informant cited above on defloration would say of this also: "If she will not—who may take her?" A single commission of adultery on the part of either spouse, even though established beyond a doubt, is not held to be sufficient cause for divorce, the problem being solved merely by a blow; only if the act is repeated, does this solution fail. Adultery appears extremely rare in economically well-balanced families. Throughout my entire stay among the Tukuna not one divorce took place in families with a stable economy, nor was there in such families any scandal involving adultery.

Tendency to matrilocal residence.—If the Tukuna are right in saying that in the old days malocas were inhabited by families of only one clan, residence must then have been patrilocal. Today there is no fixed rule, but there is a well-established tendency for parents not to let a daughter out of sight and free from their control even after marriage. Compare with this the uncle's counsel to the vorëk]: "Never abandon your mother, and look out for her even after marriage" (p. 90); and the prospective mother-in-law's threat to the suitor that she will reclaim her daughter if the latter is not well treated (p. 94).

One family of Igarapé da Rita was visibly disgusted by the marriage of a daughter to an Indian who later went to live with her in the neighborhood of Belém, about twenty-five kilometers away as the crow flies. It appeared that the parents were waiting only for some pretext to dissolve the union, since they were already openly discussing this eventuality. Usually the husband first lives for some time in the house of his in-laws. Some never leave, but most later set up their own establishments not far away. The preferred type of marriage, described earlier in this section, favors this tendency to a certain extent.

Daily life.—I should emphasize the fact that family life among the Tukuna runs with extreme calm and monotony. I have associated for months with certain families without noting the slightest altercation. The transports of rage to which

2: Nimuendajú E-5 (1941-1942) 1948
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

is unnecessary; a boy and girl may meet at a feast and leave married at the end. The wife's parents never renounce their authority over her and do not permit the husband to take her far away, which results in a certain matrilocal tendency.

Polygyny even today is considered licit, but cases of bigamy are rare. In the only case known, a famous man who was both priest and chief had three sisters as wives simultaneously. Other cases of sororate have occurred. The levirate, also formerly frequent, was considered desirable.

Jealousy may cause violent quarrels between husband and wife, but never murder and rarely divorce. Adultery, though causing scenes, is insufficient reason for divorce. Guilt is always placed on the woman. The father's authority in the family is great.

In case of robbery, the offended party requires restitution and sometimes is extremely severe with the thief.

Injuries and death occur almost exclusively when people are drunk during a feast, for alcohol stimulates certain *Tucuna* to fight. Drunkenness absolves the murderer from responsibility, but the victim's relatives always feel resentful and hostile toward him.

A house is the property of its builder, i.e., the head of the family. The clearing belongs to the woman by whom it was made.

The *Tucuna* no longer have chiefs as they are too individualistic to accept authority and as the civilized people have discredited the office by designating chiefs through whom they could exploit and oppress the Indians. Formerly, chiefs of local groups were heads of large families whose magic powers, intelligence, and ability in dealing with foreigners gave them prestige. There was never, however, a chief for the entire nation.

Death.—Until the end of the past century, the deceased and all his ornaments were placed in a large chicha jar which was covered with a vessel, buried in a cemetery, and the site sometimes marked with a rod of muirapiranga. Well-liked people sometimes were buried in the house. They put a little food, beverage, and a fire on the grave, periodically renewing it. Tessmann (1930, p. 564) incorrectly attributed secondary burial to the *Tucuna*.

WARFARE

The *Tucuna* are not warlike. They defended themselves against the *Omagua*, their principal enemies, and drove them to the banks of the Solimões River only when the latter had invaded their lands. They fought with arrows, poisoned spears, and round tapir-hide shields, and protected their paths with poisoned caltrops. They did not take prisoners or keep trophies from slain enemy. They never fought civilized people, except to avenge personal insults.